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ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a study that examined the extent to which professional development techniques for teachers existed within a sample of elementary and secondary schools. Data were obtained from a survey of a random sample of 47 classroom teachers and 15 principals in one region of a large northeastern state. A majority of both teachers and principals defined "professional development for teachers" in terms of improving technical competence and applying new trends in education to teaching and learning. Very few defined professional development in terms of graduate study. However, both groups identified advanced graduate study as one of the "best ways" for teachers to develop professionally. Both groups identified time as the most formidable obstacle to participating in professional development activities. Although teachers and principals defined professional development in terms of increasing competence and applying new trends (and other activities identified in the Glatthorn model of comprehensive teacher development), they continued to pursue professional development primarily through the traditional method of graduate study and advanced degrees and certificates. The appendix contains a copy of the survey instrument and four tables. (LMI)

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ED 370 221

TEACHER - PRINCIPAL AGREEMENT OF PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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BACKGROUND

Since the publication of A Nation at Risk (1983), education has been under continuing pressure to institute a number of reforms. Among the several approaches that have been developed in response to this pressure is the concept of development for members of the teaching profession. Certification and licensure standards have been rigorously updated. Professional development schools have focused on the preparation of educators, where teacher candidates learn, in real-life settings, what it means to be a teacher. Comprehensive professional development techniques have focused on the continuing training of teachers after entering the profession. Much of the literature written on this subject, often referred simply as CDP, addresses the benefits of the techniques. Alternatively, however, there is a growing body of literature that contends that many of the CDP techniques are impractical, and therefore unworkable in many school settings.

Comprehensive professional development techniques have been defined as the five major strategies identified by Glatthorn (1987) and others. These strategies are designed to facilitate teacher growth through professional dialogue with colleagues, curriculum development, peer supervision, peer coaching and action research.

Professional dialogue with colleagues (Glatthorn, 1987) refers to small groups of teachers meeting regularly to discuss each other's theories and understandings. Curriculum development (Glatthorn, 1987) involves teachers collaborating to write or revise their curricula through teacher-generated materials. Peer supervision (Goldsberry, 1986) adapts the components of clinical supervision for use by small groups of teachers. Peer coaching (Showers, 1984) is a cycle of theory, demonstration, practice, and feedback that constitutes formal training for teachers who

are learning a new teaching technique. Finally, action research (Lieberman, 1986) brings together a team of teachers to identify a problem and propose a solution. Many advocates of the CPD technique view it as a comprehensive approach to transform teachers into teacher-scholars.

Among those who contend that such strategies may not be practical is John Goodlad who has suggested that the typical structure of educational organizations has served to inhibit teachers' opportunities to work with and learn from each other through observation and feedback, to gain increased competence that impacts on student achievement, and to participate in training relevant to their needs. This, in turn, has led to teacher isolation which tends to inhibit teachers from using colleagues as sources of job related knowledge and skills (Goodlad, 1984). Moreover, Little (1982) has claimed that the structure of many of the schools does not allow for teachers to develop a shared language with which to talk about teaching. Thus, teachers are not provided with opportunities to interact collegially.

Hall and McKeen (1991) have reported that the traditional school-based intervention for improving instruction has included the various forms of inservice training. They report that teachers view inservice training as the least effective source of teaching knowledge and skills, while personal interactions were regarded as the most effective means to attain professional growth. This has been echoed by Koehler who reported that inservice training activities generally have come as a result of state agency mandates and have largely been ineffective and inadequate in influencing teacher behavior. "They tend to be one-shot presentations that are rarely integrated with other aspects of the school's professional growth program", he writes (Koehler, 1992, p.30). Accordingly, he continues, "teachers rarely get the opportunity to practice what others have preached. As a result, rarely do schools provide comprehensive professional growth activities

which enable teachers to functionally integrate the ideas of visiting experts. Instead, many of the inservice programs serve only to satisfy state mandated expectations and satisfy the local parent community." (Koehler, 1992, p.30)

The purpose of this research was essentially to determine, from a small sample of teachers and principals at the elementary and secondary levels, the extent to which comprehensive professional development techniques for teachers exist within their schools. This was done through a survey which sought first to identify how both teachers and principals defined professional development; second, the extent to which such development strategies have been implemented within their schools; third, how important they believed these strategies were to teachers' continuing professional development; and finally, what factors they believed were significant obstacles that prohibited teachers' development. Overarching these issues is the extent to which teachers and principals are in agreement.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

A small randomly selected sample (n=47) of classroom teachers in one region of a large northeastern state was selected to respond to an open-ended questionnaire about their perceptions of their own professional development. Additionally, a small random sample (n=15) of school principals was also selected to respond to a similar survey. The nature of the sampling plan immediately connotes the limited generalizability of the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

The survey data reveal that both teachers (75%) and principals (100%) define teacher professional development in terms of improving technical competence. Approximately one-third of the teachers (32%) and nearly all (93%) of the principals defined such development in terms

of learning about new trends and initiatives in education.Finally, only 3% of the teachers and none of the principals defined teacher professional development in terms of the acquisition of graduate credits and/or the attainment of an advanced degree.

Nearly all (80%) of the teachers and all of the principals reported workshops and seminars as the "best way" for teachers to develop themselves professionally. Moreover, despite the negligible percentage of respondents who defined professional development in terms of graduate education, 64% of the teachers and 53% of the principals reported the acquisition of additional college (i.e., graduate) credits as the "best way" for professional development. Approximately two-thirds (64%) of the teachers and one-third of the principals (33%) reported that colleague interaction and peer coaching were the "best ways", and 18% and 40% respectively of the teachers and principals reported that remaining current in the scholarly and professional literature were the "best ways".

Among the activities reported by both teachers and principals as having regularly been offered by school districts to assist teachers in their continuing growth and development were: college tuition reimbursement (64% teachers, 60% principals), paid professional days to attend off-site workshops and conferences (34% teachers, 87% principals), and in-district workshops and inservice meetings (34% teachers, 93% principals).

Teachers were also asked to respond to a series of questions regarding their personal professional development. Nearly two-thirds of the those responding reported that they first gave serious consideration to their own professional development within the first three years of teaching. Fifteen percent reported that such serious consideration did not occur until sometime between their third and seventh years of teaching. Finally, 11% reported that they didn't really

begin to strongly consider their own growth and development until sometime after their seventh year of teaching. Sixty-two percent of the teachers reported that they had prepared professional development plans that outlined their objectives; however, fewer than 20% of the respondents indicated that such plans were written. Among the most frequently reported professional development objectives were: (1) to obtain a graduate degree (28%), (2) to obtain additional certifications (19%), (3) to obtain a management position (15%), (4) to remain current in their fields (13%), and (5) to increase their own professional growth (6%). Additionally, nearly three-quarters of the teachers (73%) reported that they spent "very much" or "much" time attending additional college classes, while 53% reported that they spent "very much" or "much" time conferring with professional colleagues on topics of educational performance. (This was the same of percentage of teachers who reported that they spent "very much" or "much" time preparing daily lesson plans.) Teachers also reported that they spent "very much" or "much" time in reading educational journals or other scholarly literature (32%), shared instructional planning with colleagues (27%), curriculum design (27%), peer coaching/feedback (17%), conducting classroom or other forms of educational research (13%), peer supervision (8%), and seeking or working on educational grants (4%).

Both teachers and principals were asked to indicate how important a variety of strategies were in helping teachers to improve professionally. The three strategies for which the greatest agreement between teachers and principals were observed were: attending conferences, workshops and seminars (teachers 94%, principals 93%); conferring with colleagues on topics of educational importance (teachers 93%, principals 100%); and attending additional college classes (92% teachers, 73% principals). Other strategies were: shared planning with educational colleagues

(74% teachers, 93% principals); reading educational journals or other scholarly literature (72% teachers, 94% principals); curriculum design (73% for both teachers and principals); peer coaching/feedback (72% teachers, 86% principals); and peer supervision (60% teachers, 87% principals).

There was general agreement among the teachers (70%) and principals (53%) that time was the primary obstacle to teachers' continuing professional development. This was followed by: financial considerations (30% teachers, 73% principals), personal or family constraints (21% teachers, 60% principals); and travel time/distance to area colleges (15% teachers, 26% principals). While 2% of the teachers indicated that lack of administrative encouragement served as an obstacle to their professional development, 60% and 47% of the principals respectively reported individual resistance and lack of educational vision by teachers.

DISCUSSION

As indicated earlier in this report, education has been under continuing pressure in the last decade to institute a number of reforms. This pressure has been brought to bear in the wake of mounting criticism of both the structure and the processes of education. While much has been accomplished to improve education, the criticism continues. Among the charges being leveled is the concept of "le plus ca change, c'est la meme chose", the more things change, the more they remain the same. These critics continue to charge that, despite the continuing attempts to reform, restructure and re-invent, substantive changes in the outcomes are not forthcoming.

This study was conducted to isolate one of the many variables involved in the intricate and complex equation that is education. The study's findings, while hardly generalizable to the teaching profession as a whole, do seem to suggest that such criticism may not be unwarranted.

In fact, the findings suggest that educators may, in fact, espouse the new techniques of comprehensive professional development without transforming them in practice.

In the survey, both teachers and principals were asked to operationally define the concept of professional development for teachers. In response, both samples most frequently defined the concept in terms of improving technical competence in teaching and applying new trends and initiatives in education to the teaching-learning enterprise. Only a negligible percentage of teachers and none of the principals defined the concept in terms of advanced graduate study.

Teachers and principals also agreed that the "best way" for teachers to develop themselves professionally was through workshops and seminars. However, in apparent contrast to their collective definition of the concept, they also reported that another "best way" was the acquisition of advanced graduate study. Following graduate education, still another "best way" was reported to be peer coaching and colleague interaction. They further agreed that among the most important activities in which teachers could engage to develop themselves professionally were attending workshops, conferences and seminars, conferring with colleagues on topics of educational importance, and attending college classes.

The above findings seem to suggest that both teachers and principals view advanced graduate study as an important factor in professional development. Furthermore, when asked to indicate the ways in which schools and school districts can assist teachers in their professional development, both samples again returned to graduate study. Both teachers and principals most frequently reported tuition reimbursement as the way in which such assistance has been provided. Finally, in response to a series of questions about their personal professional development, the majority of teachers responding indicated that their first professional development objective was

to obtain an advanced graduate degree. This was followed by acquiring additional certification and obtaining positions in management. (It is interesting to note that about a third of the respondents did not begin to give serious consideration to their own professional development until three years after their first teaching assignment.) Moreover, of the nearly two-thirds who reported that they had prepared plans and objectives for their continuing development, relatively few (20%) had committed such plans to writing. Finally, when asked to indicate how frequently they engaged in a variety of suggested professional development activities, teachers most frequently and consistently (73%) chose attending college courses. Conferring with colleagues on matters of educational importance was a distant second and a full 20 percentage points behind the most popular choice. (Again, it is interesting to note that the activities suggested in Glatthorn's model received relatively little attention: shared instructional planning (27%), curriculum design (27%), peer coaching/feedback (17%), classroom or other kinds of research (13%), and peer supervision (8%).

Finally, both teachers and principals were asked to identify those obstacles that most served to inhibit professional development activities by teachers. As expected, both agreed that time was the most formidable obstacle. Both teachers and principals continually reported that the press of teaching duties, as well as the demands of personal and family responsibilities served to seriously hamper teachers' capacities for engaging in meaningful professional development activities. While some principals did report that they felt some teachers lacked the vision or resisted efforts at professional development, it may reasonably be construed that such resistance is tied directly to the press of time.

In conclusion, these research findings suggest that, while both teachers and principals

define professional development in terms of increasing competence and applying new trends and initiatives through colleague interaction and shared planning, peer coaching/feedback, and other activities identified within the Glatthorn model of comprehensive professional development, they continue to practice their professional development activities primarily through the traditional method of graduate school courses and advanced degrees and certifications.

Perhaps Goodlad is right. The structure of contemporary educational organizations may not encourage teachers to collaborate for professional growth. This same structure, moreover, appears to provide few incentives and rewards for colleague interaction and shared learning, while it continues to provide both incentives and rewards (in the form of tuition reimbursement and salary increases) to teachers to pursue the more traditional development path through increased study at the graduate level.

SELECTED RESOURCES

Glatthorn, A. (1987). Cooperative professional development: Peer centered options for teacher growth. Educational Leadership, 3 (45) 31-35.

Goldsberry, L. (1986). Colleague consultation: Another case of fools rush in. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

Goodlad, J. (1984). A place called school: Prospects for the future. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Hall, L. and McKeen, R. (1991). Peer coaching as an organization development intervention in the public schools. Education, 111 (4), 355-358.

Koehler, K.D. (1992). Education's Invisible Organization. American Secondary Education. 20 (3), 29-30.

Lieberman, A. (1986). Collaborative research: Working with, not working on. Educational Leadership, 5 (43), 28-32.

Little, J.W. (1982). Norms of collegiality and experimentation: Workplace conditions of school success. American Educational Research Journal, 19, 325-340.

National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

Showers, B. (1984). Peer coaching: A strategy for facilitating transfer of training. Eugene, OR: Center for Educational Policy and management.

Survey Questionnaire Tables

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This survey instrument was designed to obtain information about the professional development of teachers. In responding, please deal with each question as honestly as possible. Although you are requested to disclose your name, please be assured that no information that you provide will be compiled or analyzed in such a way that your answers will be personally identifiable. Having your name will simply help to facilitate a follow-up should one be necessary. These survey results will be useful to the Office of Graduate Studies in studying future initiatives. Moreover, should the survey results be found to be significant, a paper will be prepared for presentation at a scholarly conference.

1. How would you define ***professional development*** for members of the teaching profession, in general, and you, in particular?

2. What activities (e.g., additional college classes, workshops, or seminars; colleague interaction; reading scholarly journals or other educational literature) would best help you to develop yourself professionally?

3. Does your school or school district actively encourage you to develop yourself professionally?

_____ Yes _____ No (Skip to question #5)

4. What assistance does your school or school district provide to assist in your professional development? (Please be specific)

5. How long after you began to teach regularly did you begin to seriously consider your own professional development? (Mark only one response)

____ Almost immediately
____ During my first year of teaching
____ Sometime between my first and third year of teaching
____ Between my third and seventh year of teaching
____ Between my seventh and tenth year of teaching
____ Don't remember

6. Have you ever developed a personal professional development plan?

___ Yes ___ No (Skip to question #10)

7. If "yes".... (a) after about how many years of teaching experience was it developed? _____

(b) who (if anyone) helped you to develop it? (Give job title(s), not names)

_____

(c) what is (are) the key goal(s) or objective(s)of your plan?

8. Is such a personal professional development plan written? ___ Yes ___ No

9. Have your goals or objectives changed since you first developed a personal professional development plan? How? At what point in your career did your goal(s) or objective(s) change?

10. What obstacles exist which you think prevent you from developing yourself professionally? (Please be specific)

11. What can be done to help to overcome these obstacles? Who can best help to overcome these obstacles? (Please be specific)

After having completed the above questions, please respond to the follow two questions. Please do not go back and change any of your previous answers. (Please circle the appropriate response.)

	Very Much	Much	Some	Little or None
12. How much of your time is spent				
preparing daily lesson plans	1	2	3	4
reading educational journals or other scholarly literature	1	2	3	4
attending conferences, workshops, or seminars	1	2	3	4
attending additional college classes	1	2	3	4
conferring with colleagues on topics of educational importance	1	2	3	4
conducting classroom or other kinds of educational research	1	2	3	4
seeking or working on grants	1	2	3	4
shared instructional planning with colleagues	1	2	3	4
curriculum design	1	2	3	4
peer coaching/feedback	1	2	3	4
peer supervision	1	2	3	4

	Very Important	Moderately Important	Marginally Important	Not Important
13. How important is each of the following in helping you to develop yourself professionally?				
preparing lesson plans	1	2	3	4
reading educational journals or other scholarly literature	1	2	3	4
attending conferences, workshops, or seminars	1	2	3	4
attending additional college classes	1	2	3	4
conferring with colleagues on topics of educational importance	1	2	3	4
conducting classroom or other kinds of educational research	1	2	3	4
seeking or working on grants	1	2	3	4
shared instructional planning with colleagues	1	2	3	4
curriculum design	1	2	3	4
peer coaching/feedback	1	2	3	4
peer supervision	1	2	3	4

The following information is for follow-up and statistical reporting purposes only. If, after the demographic data have been coded, there is no need for follow-up, this page will be detached from the remainder of the questionnaire and will be destroyed.

Your name:_____

Address:_____

Telephone:_____

Are you a tenured teacher? _____ Yes _____ No

How many years of full-time teaching experience do you have? _____

How many years of administrative (e.g., chair, supervisor) experience do you have? _____

In what school district are you employed?_____

In what school(s) do you work?_____

Please use the following space to provide any comments that you wish to make.

Thank you for answering these questions. Please return your completed questionnaire to the data collector.

Table 1
Time Spent by Teachers on Professional Development
Teacher-Reported

	Very Much	Much	Some	Little or None
preparing daily lesson plans	17	40	32	9
reading educational journals or other scholarly literature	4	28	57	11
attending conferences, workshops, or seminars	2	17	70	11
attending additional college classes	38	34	23	4
conferring with colleagues on topics of educational importance	17	36	45	2
conducting classroom or other kinds of educational research	2	11	34	53
seeking or working on grants	2	2	11	85
shared instructional planning with colleagues	9	28	49	15
curriculum design	9	28	43	21
peer coaching/feedback	2	15	38	43
peer supervision	2	6	26	64

Table 2

Importance to Teacher Professional Development
Teacher-Reported

	Very Important	Moderately Important	Marginally Important	Not Important
preparing daily lesson plans	21	36	26	15
reading educational journals or other scholarly literature	34	38	28	0
attending conferences, workshops, or seminars	51	43	6	0
attending additional college classes	66	26	8	0
conferring with colleagues on topics of educational importance	55	38	4	2
conducting classroom or other kinds of educational research	13	32	36	19
seeking or working on grants	11	15	40	34
shared instructional planning with colleagues	38	36	17	9
curriculum design	30	43	21	6
peer coaching/feedback	36	36	11	15
peer supervision	26	34	21	17

Table 3

Importance to Teacher Professional Development
Principal-Reported

	Very Important	Moderately Important	Marginally Important	Not Important
preparing daily lesson plans	20	33	40	7
reading educational journals or other scholarly literature	27	67	6	0
attending conferences, workshops, or seminars	33	60	7	0
attending additional college classes	33	40	20	7
conferring with colleagues on topics of educational importance	94	6	0	0
conducting classroom or other kinds of educational research	47	33	20	0
seeking or working on grants	13	53	27	7
shared instructional planning with colleagues	73	20	0	7
curriculum design	20	53	27	0
peer coaching/feedback	53	33	14	0
peer supervision	60	27	13	0

Table 4
Time Spent by Teachers on Professional Development
Principal-Reported

	Very Much	Much	Some	Little or None
preparing daily lesson plans	17	40	32	9
reading educational journals or other scholarly literature	4	28	57	11
attending conferences, workshops, or seminars	2	17	70	11
attending additional college classes	38	34	23	4
conferring with colleagues on topics of educational importance	17	36	45	2
conducting classroom or other kinds of educational research	2	11	34	53
seeking or working on grants	2	2	11	85
shared instructional planning with colleagues	9	28	49	15
curriculum design	9	28	43	21
peer coaching/feedback	2	15	38	43
peer supervision	2	6	26	64